

WHY MAY I REJOICE?

NO. 1321

A SERMON

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*“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you;
but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”*

Luke 10:20.

You will remember that last Lord's-day we saw our Lord correcting a very natural grief, and supplying its place by a more needful sorrow, as He said to the women, “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children” [See No. 1320—“Wherefore Should I Weep?”].

Now, this morning we shall see Him correcting a very natural joy, and directing its gladness into a more elevated channel. “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” If we commit ourselves to Him He will guide us aright in all things, and teach us to sanctify alike our grief and our gladness.

We shall commence our discourse by saying that our Lord did not blame or upbraid the seventy for rejoicing that the devils were subject to them. It would have been a very strange thing if they were not joyous on the occasion of so great a success. They had been sent forth upon their Lord's errand, they had gone forward unhesitatingly in His name, girded with His strength, and His power had been revealed so that His name had been glorified, should they not rejoice? It was the kingdom of God which they had proclaimed, should they not be joyful? It was their Lord's enemy, as well as their own, who had “fallen like lightning from heaven,” should they not exult? It was not likely, therefore, that the Lord Jesus was angry at their joy when they returned again, saying, “Lord, even the spirits are subject unto us through your name.”

We must read our Lord's words according to the manner of Oriental speech. The peculiar idiom of our Savior's speech often makes Him appear to be actually forbidding what He only places in a secondary place. He did not mean in the present instance to censure their joy in their success, but only to make it subordinate to another rejoicing, and to prevent its growing to excess.

Some have thought that they detected in the seventy too much personal exultation, if not an almost childish triumph, in the success which they had achieved. I must confess I see small trace of such a feeling in their report to their Master. Our Lord Himself evidently coincided with the truth of their report, for He also said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,” I can hardly think that He could have seen that sight without joy, and therefore, in some measure, He shared in the feelings of His servants. Had He observed in these brethren that excess of childish exultation and vainglory which is supposed, I think He would hardly have gone on to invest such novices with yet more power, and yet He did so, for we read in the nineteenth verse—“Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”

Had they been intoxicated with a sort of childish glee, the wisdom of our Lord, as commander in that crusade, would have led Him to say to them, “I had many things to have given unto you, but you cannot bear them now. I see already that you are intoxicated with your present victories, and therefore I must withhold from you the extraordinary gifts of My kingdom till you are better prepared to receive them with humility and to use them with wisdom.”

Such prudent conduct had been in accordance with the usual proceedings of our wise Teacher. But He saw no such excessive exultation, whatever He might fear as likely to occur by and by, He saw nothing as yet to blame in them, and so He went on to say, “therefore I give you power over all the

power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” We cannot understand Him to be condemning their rejoicing over the fall of devils, for He says, “Rejoice rather,” and this almost implies that you may rejoice in the first subject of joy in some degree. “Notwithstanding,” He says, “in this rejoice not; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” The one is forbidden only in comparison with the other. We may rejoice that God blesses our labors, but still it must be a far less prominent joy than that which springs out of our personal interest in the salvation of God. Church members may be glad when they see a great revival, and their numbers largely increased, but at such times it is doubly needful to look to vital godliness and personal religion, or the joy may be turned into mourning.

Now, my brethren, taking the incident as it will apply to ourselves, there may be some of you here present to whom God has given many gifts for use in the kingdom of heaven, He may also have given you influence in His church, and power among men of the world, and moreover, your gifts and your power have not been used in vain, they have been made useful in many ways, so that your course has been one of honor and success. The kingdom of God has come near to many through you, and the great enemy’s kingdom has suffered injury by your means. Because of all this you are greatly cheered. Is this wrong? Ought you not to be full of joy? I say yes, assuredly, you are bound to be glad.

We should all be grateful for gifts, grateful for influence, grateful for success, but a gratitude which is not attended with joy can scarcely be called gratitude at all. Would you have gratitude lament the possession of the blessing for which she is grateful? There must be joy in the thing received or else one can hardly be imagined to be thankful. If gratitude for these things be a duty, then surely a measure of joy concerning them must also be a duty. You may rejoice that to you is this grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and you may be glad that from you the Word of God has sounded forth throughout all the region in which you dwell.

Thus far we go, but we must not exceed due bounds, lest we become transgressors, this joy must be held within its own lines and never suffered to run riot. Let us pause and see how our Lord Jesus puts a restraining “notwithstanding” and a repressing negative upon this joy when He judges that it is in danger of passing due bounds, and let us also note how He supplies the place of this joy by something higher and better when He says—“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”

We shall dwell upon three things this morning. First, *the joy which needs moderating*—“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not,” secondly, *the joy which needs exciting*—“Rather rejoice,” and then, thirdly, *the joy of the Lord in sympathy with this last joy*. Just read the first line of the twenty-first verse—“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit.” Our Lord could unite in this joy under certain aspects of it.

I. First, then, THE JOY WHICH NEEDS MODERATING.

It is the joy of triumph over evil spirits, the joy of having preached the Gospel and wrought wonders—in a word, the joy of gifts, power, and success. This needs moderating—first, because *it is so apt to degenerate into pride*. The seventy were not proud, for they said, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us *through your name*.” This was a very proper way of reporting results. They did not arrogate any measure of the success to themselves, but they ascribed it to the matchless, all-conquering name which they had used.

So far, all was well, but, my brethren, the tendency of human nature is towards self-exaltation, and so by degrees we come to emphasize the “*to us*,” and we allow the “*through your name*” to be uttered softly, and yet more softly, until it is only used as a matter of form, and we in our hearts ascribe the whole success to ourselves. If God shall bless any man with long-continued success in soul-winning, even though that is a higher achievement than the casting out of devils, there is an evil tendency in our corrupt nature which will tempt such a man to dream that in him there is some peculiar excellence or special virtue. He will say in his heart, “Lord, even great sinners and proud infidels have been turned to You by my preaching,” and he may at the same time forget that it was not his preaching, but the name of Jesus, which accomplished the notable deed.

We are nothing, however much God may have wrought by us, all the glory is due unto the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, yet we are so base as to take credit to ourselves. Who among us can claim to have been perfectly free from this temptation? True, the Lord keeps His servants humble when He uses them, and if they abound in grace they may safely abound in gifts also, saints may be safely trusted with abundant influence if they are abundantly under the influence of the Holy Spirit, but to be preserved when thus eminently honored is an exceedingly great favor.

When we see a successful worker walking very humbly, we may say, "This is the finger of God." Leave corrupt nature to itself, and as a warm atmosphere soon causes dead flesh to become putrid, so will the ease and comfort of self-congratulation and prosperity speedily breed corruption in human nature, hence it is needful that joy in gift and success should be kept under due control, and if it be tolerated in a measure, as it may be, it must nevertheless not be indulged to any great extent lest evil consequences come to us. Hitherto may it come, but no further, lest the Lord behold us waxing exceeding proud and put us aside from His work altogether, and take unto Himself other instruments which will not attempt to rob Him of His glory.

Again, this joy which needs to be moderated should be restrained by the reflection that *it is no evidence of grace in the heart that we possess gifts, or that we are successful*. Talents are possessed even by wicked and slothful servants. Grace without talent will save, but talent without grace will only increase our condemnation. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." The highest conceivable gifts for church work and the greatest influence in the church are worthless apart from grace.

The possession of such powers may be accompanied by hypocrisy and falsehood—it was so in our Lord's day. Judas wrought miracles, Judas preached the Gospel, Judas was not only a member of the church, but a trusted officer in it, yet Judas went unto his own place, for he was a son of perdition. Our Lord tells us to expect many cases of graceless workers, for He says, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity."

Observe that this warning speaks not of a few, but of many, we shall not only see a Judas once in eighteen centuries, but *many* of whom this shall be the case. Men have gone forth making use of the name of Jesus, and God has honored the name, though He has not accepted the men who used it. They have preached, and the message has been true, and God has owned the truth, but the men have not been true, and consequently they have been abhorred of the Lord.

Good seed will grow even though it was scattered by a leprous hand. Let us beware, however, of speaking the truth with lying lips. Let us beware, lest we be like Balaam, who had his eyes opened to see marvelous visions of the future, and his tongue inspired to utter deep things, and yet he fell among the accursed, because he ran greedily after a reward.

Do not rejoice, then, dear brethren, because God blesses you in what you are doing, so that you see souls saved and yourself honored, for this might happen to one for whom the Lord has no regard, but rather rejoice in being really and truly one of the Lord's own people, written in heaven. Let us keep under our body, and watch unto prayer, lest haply, after having preached to others, we ourselves should become castaways. It will be a dreadful thing to keep the door of the King's great banquet hall, and open it to others, and yet to perish with hunger yourself.

Moreover, it is very unsafe to rejoice unduly in the work which we have done, because *the work after all may not turn out to be all that it appears*. I do not know how much of real good the seventy had wrought. There can scarcely have been very many converts, for otherwise the number of the names would have been greater when the disciples assembled in the upper room at Pentecost. We will not, however, judge the work of the seventy, but we do know this, that it is very easy for us to go forth and

for a time to succeed, so that it seems as if even the devils were subject to us, and yet there may be no true work of God. Crowds may gather to listen, there may be manifestations of deep emotion, the number of the conversions put down on paper may be very great, and yet there may be little or nothing in the whole matter worthy of real joy.

So it may be in other forms of service, in the Sunday school or in any other place, we may think we have succeeded, and yet we may have only been building on the sand a baseless structure which the next tide will carry away. We ought to remember that every man's work must be tested ere long, "for the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." It is too early to begin to rejoice until the fire has passed over our life-work. The edifice is very lofty, and apparently very fair, but what if those walls should turn out to be composed of straw, the foundations of stubble, and the rafters of dry wood? How soon will they yield to the fire, and how rapidly will the fabric disappear.

He who has built the tiniest cell of sparkling gems, or the smallest cottage of gold, has done more than he who has heaped aloft into the air a pyramid of hay. It is not the quantity of work done, it is not the space occupied in church history, it is not the noise of our great doings, the question is, what is really and truly done, the quality is far more important than the quantity, the enduring character of the work is far more to be considered than the flash and the glare of it.

Therefore rejoice not, O young man, in all the brilliant success which has for the present attended you, and rejoice not even you old man, though you have had half a century of prosperity, rejoice not so much in this as to exalt yourself because of it, but rather rejoice in something safer and more gracious, rejoice that your name is written in heaven, if so it be.

This joy, again, however good our work may be, is to be moderated because *it does not prove that we are any more gracious than others of far less gift and usefulness*. Did you notice in the chapter which precedes my text that nine of the apostles attempted to cast out a devil from a lunatic child, but were unable to accomplish it, so that they said to the Master, "Why could not we cast him out?" The majority of the sacred conclave of apostles failed to cast out a devil, and yet seventy inferior persons all return with joy, and say, "Lord, even the spirits are subject unto us." Do you draw the inference, therefore, that the seventy were superior to the apostles? If you do, you have made a very grand mistake, for they were by no means so, and it would be a very great pity for any person who has been made useful in the kingdom of God to infer that he is therefore better than those whose earnest labors are crowned by no such apparent results.

An obscure child of God whose name has never been mentioned in the church may yet be more worthy than we are. Of all estimates of ourselves, that which is founded upon our apparent usefulness is likely to be most deceptive. Go to, sir, if you consider yourself to be something because you have wrought wonders. I will show you the choicest of my Master's children on sick beds, I will show you the richest and rarest piety connected with illiterate poverty, I will show you a man who cannot speak a sentence grammatically, who lives in the very bosom of Christ, and will put you to the blush for the depth and power of his vital godliness.

I will find you one who shines as a precious jewel in JEHOVAH'S sight, compared with whom you are a poor dull pebble, and yet you are highly esteemed, and he has little honor. His prayers have been of a thousand times more use to the church than your preaching, yea, it may be that your preaching has owed its success to his prayers. We cannot judge character by gift. He who has one talent, and uses it well, shall have better acceptance at the last than he who has five talents and uses them ill, and he who fills his circle, though that circle be small, shall have far more comfort therein than he who with a vast field has nevertheless left the major part of it altogether unfilled. Great importance in the public mind is no argument of great grace, a man is none the worthier for being successful, the best may not be the most prosperous. Boast not yourself, O fisherman, because your net is filled, for as good men as you are have toiled all night and taken nothing.

Again, this joy in success needs to be kept under tight rein because *it is not an abiding joy*. If you, O man, rejoice today because of subject devils, what will you do tomorrow when the devils break loose

again? If you return from your labor full of success, and rejoice, what will you do when another time you will have to plow the thankless rock and break the plowshare? What if your Master should send you where there will be no response to your invitations? What if He should send you among Samaritans who will not even hear you and you shall have to go from city to city and wipe off the dust of your feet against them? What if you should meet a child possessed of a devil and find that you cannot cast out the evil spirit because this kind goes not out except with prayer and fasting? Why, man, you will be sorely depressed, then, and your courage will fail.

If you have fed your soul upon such light bread as apparent success, it will enfeeble you, and what will you do when your prosperity wanes? You will not have steadfastness enough to go on under discouragement, and you will shun your Lord's service. This will be ill indeed! O for a faith that is nourished on something better than appearances—a faith which does not live on gift or influence, or present success, but sustains itself upon the unfailing promise of the ever blessed God. This is what we need.

Once again, this joy, if we were to be filled with it to overflowing, would be found *unable to bear the strain of trial, trouble, temptation, and especially of death*. Take the last, will any man, when he lies dying be able to console himself with the reflection, "I have testified of Christ to others"? Will he not need some other confidence? Will he not require something far more personal? Will this be the sweet morsel that shall stay the hunger of his soul? What if he had power over devils, may not devils yet obtain power over him? Will he be able to cheer himself amidst death's chilly waves with this boast—"I was a loud talker and a mighty professor, and the cause of Christ grew under my leadership"? Nay, in such times as that we shall want surer consolations and diviner stays than these.

Unhappy will he be who has accustomed himself to live upon the excitement of crowded meetings, or upon the laudatory criticisms of friends. Gifts, attainments, labors, successes, all heaped together, cannot support a soul on the verge of eternity. There is ever present the fact that such things are no sure sign of regeneration. Did not the sons of the Pharisees cast out devils? Did not the people say of Simon Magus, "This man is the great power of God"? Yet these were graceless deceivers. We must have sure evidence of the new birth. We must know that our citizenship is in heaven, we must know that we belong to Jesus, in one word, we must know that our names are written in heaven or else we shall find ourselves utterly undone in our dying hours.

For all these reasons, then, be not too elated because of devils conquered, crowds gathered, or souls saved, but hearken to your Lord's voice while He points you to other reasons for rejoicing.

II. So now we come, secondly, to consider THE JOY WHICH NEEDS EXCITING.

"Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." I am glad, my brethren, that this is the joy in which we indulge to the full, because it is one in which *all the saints may unite* and take their share. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, my dear brother, though you can do but little for Him, you may rejoice that your name is written in heaven. Here the bedridden sister may rejoice! Here the incurably diseased may exult. The child of God, whose tongue is silenced by infirmity, and whose conflicts with devils are confined to his closet and his chamber, may come in and say, "I, too, can rejoice that my name is written in heaven." Have you never remarked how our aged friends always delight to sing—

*"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes."*

They do so because experience has led them to dwell much on the joy of having their names written in heaven. The joy which our Lord commends is one which *springs from faith*, while the other joy arises alone from sight. A man can see that he has gifts. He can see that he has power and influence, he can see that he has success, but rest assured that every joy which comes to believers through the sight of the eyes

is a doubtful joy. It is a dainty of which we must eat in scanty measure. Have you found such honey as this? eat not too much of it lest it sicken you.

But the joy caused by our names being written in heaven comes of faith, for eye has not seen the record, neither has any angel read it to us, and only because we believe in Jesus are we assured of it, for this reason the joy grows in good soil and is in itself safe. All the joys of faith are safe as the water which flowed from the smitten rock, no poisonous streams can ever issue from that source.

This joy is a heavenly manna whereof a man may eat according to his eating, and let his soul be satiated. This is healthy meat which breeds no plague in the camp as the eating of the quails did, for the quails were sent in wrath to satisfy their fierce desires. We never hear of men dying of eating the manna which came down from heaven, but they did die through eating quails, which were food for their lusts. Be it yours to get as much as ever you can of the joys of faith, and especially of this—"Rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

This joy consists in knowing our election, "knowing, dearly beloved, your election of God," knowing that your names were written in heaven from before the foundation of the world. Oh, what an inconceivable delight is this! To be God's choice is the choicest of delights. The joy of having your name written in heaven includes the joy of knowing that you are precious to the Lord, for it is written, "a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

To be written in heaven means that we are precious in the sight of the Lord, that He has noted us down in the list of His crown jewels, and will preserve us for Himself till the day in which all His sacred regalia shall be complete. Blessed are those who stand recorded in the inventory of heaven's jewel house.

To be written in heaven means that you claim the right of citizenship in the New Jerusalem, "the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven." Just as there is a roll kept by great cities in which they inscribe the names of citizens, so do we rejoice that our names are written in the roll of the city above, and that henceforth our citizenship is in heaven, from where we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus. This is a broad subject for rejoicing, for it includes priceless privileges and honors more than royal.

We also rejoice that our names are written, that is, known and published in heaven. Paul mentioned certain of his fellow servants of whom he said, "whose names are written in heaven," as much as to say though they have neither fame nor honor here they have a perpetual record where honor is worth receiving, namely, before the throne of God. The heavenly writing signifies that we are part and parcel of Christ's new kingdom, we are inscribed among His soldiers, we are commissioned to bear hardness for His sake. We are written in heaven among the friends of Jesus, we are accounted as of the sacred brotherhood. In the great book of the divine Fatherhood, we are numbered among the children, and henceforth we shall be regarded and treated as belonging to the one family in heaven and in earth. This is the matter concerning which we are called to rejoice. "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

I see in this fact abundant cause for joy, but I cannot stay this morning, to bring it out in detail. I would have you joy in the great grace which first inscribed your name in God's eternal book. Oh, bless the sovereign, distinguishing, discriminating grace which wrote down your unworthy name, where there might have stood the name of a king, or of an emperor, or the name of a person of great repute, of superior talent, or of great eloquence and learning. Instead of those which men esteem to be great names there stands your common place name, therefore give the grace of God all the glory evermore.

And then rejoice in the grace which has kept your name inscribed in that heavenly roll, so that over you that ancient threatening of the law has had no power—"Whosoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." (Exo. 32:33). But up to now you have stood among those of whom the Spirit speaks expressly in the book of the Revelation—"He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels." There stands your name still recorded in the Lamb's book of life, though

many a tear of yours might well fall upon it to think what grace it is which keeps it there and will keep it there forever.

A name among God's sons and daughters is better for you than if your name were in Debrett's Peerage, or in the Royal Almanac de Gotha. Being in the book of life guarantees you peace, joy, security, blessedness now, and secures you a place hereafter among the blood-washed host in the "many mansions," which Christ has gone to prepare for those whom His Father has given Him.

Sit down now, beloved, and let your soul triumph to the last degree of joy in this—your names are written in heaven. Forget the falling devils for awhile, forget your abilities, forget your successes, cast these all at your Redeemer's feet, where they ought to be, and then take this to yourself as your joy, your portion, your heaven below, that your name is written in the family register of the Eternal. May the Holy Spirit inspire you with this sublime delight.

Brethren, *this is a joy which can be cultivated*. How are we to cultivate it? If we desire to have much of this joy we must make the fact sure. We must be certain that our names are written in heaven, or else we cannot rejoice in it. Let your faith grow until it reaches the full assurance of faith, and then shall you rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

"How am I to know it?" says one. Well, friend, one thing is sure, if God has written you down among those who are saved you can soon know it because you are saved. If you are forgiven, your name is written among the forgiven. If you are indeed quickened and made alive, your name is written amongst the living in Zion. I will not invite you to go further and peer into that which is unrevealed, for if I did so I should be as much out of my sphere as those are who pretend to bring men messages from the spirit world. The Lord gives not to any soul dead in sin the least right to believe that it is written among the living, neither gives He to any ungodly man the liberty to hope that he is written among the elect of God.

We must have evidence, not dreams and airy suppositions, and the evidence of being written in heaven is that a man has been called by grace out of the world to follow Jesus. We see our election by our calling, and not else. We may know what is written about us in heaven by that which is written within us on earth. If grace has written upon your heart till you are "an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men," your name is in His secret book. If you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ you are His, and the Lord knows them that are His, and has written them down in His own private tablets which He carries in His bosom. If your name be among true believers on earth it is amongst the redeemed in heaven, you need not question that, for the declarations of Scripture put it beyond a doubt.

If you would rejoice in your name's being written in heaven, not only be assured of the fact, but meditate much upon it. Let this be frequently on your mind, "My name is written in heaven, beneath the name of my Lord the Lamb it is inscribed. I am one of His redeemed, and He writes me down among His dearly purchased property. He knows me, looks upon me and regards me as His treasure. I am not my own, I am bought with a price, I belong to Him." Go, brother, and exult in this, and let the sweet influence of it upon your life be daily seen, for this joy, dear friend, *will make you set very loose by everything else on earth*.

What if you be rich! rejoice not in this, for riches take to themselves wings and fly away, but rather rejoice because your name is written in heaven. If you be a man of learning thank God for your knowledge, and use it for His glory, but, nevertheless, rejoice not in this, for what is earthly knowledge often but learned ignorance? "Rather rejoice because your name is written in heaven." If you be a person of position in the church, thank God if you may glorify Him thereby, but rather rejoice because your name is written in heaven. Are you strong and in good health, be grateful for the privilege, but rather rejoice because your name is written in heaven.

Turn this inspired text round another way, and if you have any sorrow, or if you mourn the absence of any earthly good, do not lament too bitterly, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. You are poor. Well, be not despondent, for your name is written in heaven. You are despised, and your name is cast out as evil, but rejoice none the less, for it is written in heaven. You have but few

gifts and abilities, but your name is written in heaven. You could not stand up and edify a multitude, but your name is written in heaven. When you die your departure will make but a small gap in the church's ranks, but your name is written in heaven.

Whatever you lack or whatever you suffer, let this console you, and at the same time *let it strengthen you for service*. The joy of the Lord is your strength, you will feel able to go forward in God's work when you can boldly say, "My name is written in heaven. I may well serve Him who has so graciously redeemed me, He has put me down among His people, why should I not therefore expect Him to be with me when I go upon His errands and attempt to win Him glory? My name is written in heaven, and therefore I will live for Him to the utmost of my strength, and spend and be spent for His name."

There seems to me to be such a wonderful moral and spiritual power about this joy in having one's name written in heaven that it does not require me to explain why the Savior encourages you to indulge in it. It is a corrective to the other joy, but it has about it also independently of that so many admirable uses that we need not add a word by way of guarding it, or restraining it, but may, on the contrary, earnestly invite you to partake of it without stint. Eat the fat and drink the sweet, rejoice, yea, rejoice abundantly, rejoice, and yet again rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

III. Now, lastly, into this joy the Savior enters, and we have to look in the third place to THE JOY OF THE LORD IN SYMPATHY with it, and so we add to our text the first sentence of the twenty-first verse—"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the spirit."

Why did He rejoice? I think it was with a very same joy that He bids us cultivate as far as it related to Himself, for you see He rejoiced because *grace was given*. He said, "I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." It makes Christ's heart glad to think that God has been gracious to the sons of men, to think that He has plucked some of the race out of the horrible pit, and lifted them up from the miry clay, and brought them out of darkness into His marvelous light. It makes His soul glad to see that sin has been overcome in many men, and that many have been renewed in the spirit of their minds by divine grace.

Jesus was also glad at *the Father's choice*. He said, "I thank You, O Father." He looks at these seventy babes out of whose mouth He has ordained strength, and He says, "I thank you, O Father, for having chosen these." They looked a wretched regiment to conquer the world with, did they not? A company of fishermen and peasants, men of the lower order. If a man had to shake the world he might naturally wish for choice spirits, the *elite*, the aristocracy of thought, at any rate, if not the aristocracy of gold and silver. He might wish to select the refined, the noble, the educated for his great enterprise. But Jesus Christ is perfectly satisfied with His Father's choice.

It has given me intense joy sometimes to think that our dear Savior is perfectly satisfied to think that His Father should have chosen *me*. He is not like Hiram, who, when King Solomon gave him certain cities, was discontented with them, but our Lord has never spoken a word against any of the sheep His Father gave Him, nor has He despised any of the elect ones whom the Father has put into His hand. He is perfectly content with you, beloved, perfectly satisfied that you should be chosen, though you are not one of the wise and prudent, that you should be chosen, though you are like one of the "base things of this world." Jesus rejoiced and thanked the Father because of the choice which His sovereign grace has made.

Notice the spirit in which Jesus puts His thanksgiving—He is satisfied with the choice *because it is God's choice*. "Even so, Father," said He, "for so it seemed good in your sight." That is the true spirit of Christ, to be content with what God wills because God wills it—He has no questions, no judgments, but shows an entire submission, nay an intense delight, in the august will of God. Let us, also, delight ourselves this morning in the fact that our names are written in heaven because God willed them to be there. How well satisfied we ought to be with that will, but how much more joyous may we be because Christ also is content with that will, by which we are given to Him that we may be His people.

Then our Savior went on to rejoice *because the grace of God given to us has revealed to us Christ, and revealed to us the Father*, for He says, "no man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the

Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.” Now, the grace of God has manifested itself to you and to me, beloved in Christ, by revealing the Father, whom we now inwardly and truly know. We can say in our very souls, “Our Father which art in heaven.” And we also know the Son. We cannot tell others all we know of Him, all the secret fellowships we have had, and into what deep communion we have entered, but we know Christ and are known of Him, and this is our life’s work to go on to know Him yet more and more, and to know the Father in Him.

Jesus exulted because *there was a fellowship about all this*, for He speaks of His knowing the Father and the Father knowing Him, and then of our knowing the Father because the Son has revealed Him to us—all of which implies a wondrous communication and communion with the Father and with the Son.

Now, this, I take it, is the cream of joy, a joy in which Christ partakes as He has fellowship with the Father and with us, and of which we partake as we have fellowship with Him and with the Father. Now, mark, there is nothing of this in, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us,” there is nothing of this when we merely have success in soul-winning.

A man may work marvels, and yet have no fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and hence he may lack that which is the essence, the center point, the focus of all true joy. But he who has his name written in heaven has had the Father revealed to him through the Son, and in this he may exceedingly rejoice, for the very news of this is what kings and prophets waited for and found not, this is that which even angels desire to look into, therefore, brethren rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.

My last word is for those who know nothing about their names being written in heaven. I would like to turn the text upon you for a second or so, for it has a dark side to you, and I pray God that as you see it you may tremble and fly to Christ. Whatever you have in this world, sinner, you have nothing worth rejoicing in, because you cannot say your name is written in heaven. Rejoice neither in your wealth, your health, your children, your prosperity, your position, your success, for if your name be not written in heaven, Ichabod is written over all your choicest possessions. As you look on all that you have gained, remember that God can make your souls to hunger and faint even in the midst of all these things. Listen to the thunder of that dreadful sentence, “I will curse your blessings.” “The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but He blesses the habitation of the righteous.” Oh that your names may be written in heaven for His mercy’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 9:51-62, 10:1-24

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—219, 239, 719

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